

# The Arts

## January



**Seattle, WA**—An art exhibit at the Roq la Rue Gallery called “Gods and Monsters” featured a work called “Frankenkreist,” which depicted Christ as Frankenstein’s monster; and “Naughty Guadalupe,” which depicted a topless Our Lady of Guadalupe. Shortly after the show started, a piece depicting the Koran with a Buddha carved in it was withdrawn for fear of violent reprisals from Muslims. Gallery owner Kirsten Anderson, when asked about why she didn’t remove the art offensive to Catholics, responded, “Christians can take it.”

## January 10

**Boston, MA**—Singer/comedian Stephen Lynch performed at Club Passim. One of his songs is “Priest” from his 1998 album “A Little Bit Special.” He said he hoped to get an enthusiastic reaction when “I dedicate that one to the cardinal.” He said he was “offending the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.” Lyrics of the song include: “I cannot control myself/ It rips my soul apart/ for one small sheep among my flock has/ Stole the shepherd’s heart. Altar boy, altar boy/ confess your sins to me/ You will find the grace of God/ Inside my rectory...You can play my organ all night long/ If you promise never to tell.” Lynch also brought his show to Minneapolis, MN; Austin, TX; and Chicago.

## January 16

**Las Vegas, NV**—Magicians Penn and Teller performed a skit in front of 400 people at the World Magic Seminar held at the Las Vegas Riviera. A nearly-naked Teller appeared on stage dressed as Christ on a full-sized cross. Then a midget dressed as an angel performed a simulated sex act on him. Penn unveiled the scene by pulling away a “Shroud of Turin” that covered the cross.

## February 1

**San Diego, CA**—The play “Nuevo California” by Bernardo Solano and Allan Havis premiered. Set in 2028, it features a Mexican-American pope who becomes a pop-star and distributes condoms. The pope is gunned down while on a visit to Las Playas beach and spends the rest of the play dreaming in a coma.

## **March 10**

**Boston, MA**—Two plays by Jeremy Goldstein premiered at the Black Box Theater: “Pope and Anti-Pope,” and “The Confession of Emmanuel.” The former chronicles seven anti-popes fighting over their claims to the papacy. Goldstein said, “It’s about the absoluteness, the black-and-white mentality of the Catholic Church, and hinting that it doesn’t have to be that way.” The second play is about a Jewish man who goes to confession to spite his mother. The play was described as poking “fun at religious conventions that, according to Goldstein, no longer apply to today’s world.”

## **April**

**Princeton, NJ**—The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University hosted “Ricanstructions,” an art exhibit by Juan Sanchez. Included in the exhibit was a display called “Shackles of the AIDS Virus,” a 1996 work by the artist that features such devotional items as scapulars and images of the Virgin Mary arranged in a circle. Another display showed naked female torsos arranged in the shape of a cross; it was labeled “Crucifixion No. 2.” There was also a display of torn up images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

## **May**

**New York, NY**—“Bill Maher: Victory Begins at Home,” a one-man show, opened on Broadway. While talking about Islam he said, “What’s the reason for this insanity? One word: religion. The Catholics got away with f-ing kids.” There was a mixed reaction from the audience and nervous laughter. He started to goad the audience, saying, “Oh come on! Get the rod out of your a—!” Then he imitated a priest speaking to an altar boy:

“Put some more lotion on Father.” He picked up his water bottle and said “Holy Lubricant, Father!” There was still shocked laughter at this. He said, “Come on people! It’s not a few bad apples here: it’s systemic! Where have you been for the past two years? They had a big meeting and said, ‘Well, we had a good run....’”

While talking about Islam, he said that their problem is when a religious leader says something, they believe it. “When the pope says something, we just don’t pay attention.” He imitated the pope, saying, “No masturbation,” and then imitated a dismissive reaction: “Yes, thank you very much....” When the topic turned to “religion can be dangerous,” he talked about the beliefs of Muslims, saying, “Where will it stop? Why not sacrifice virgins? Or have sex with boys outside the church?” “Don’t regulate drugs: regulate religion. I was raised Catholic and I was not molested. I’m a little insulted. Apparently I wasn’t attractive enough.” “The problem is they drill religion into your head when you are very young. Well, when you are four years old you believe in Santa Claus, too. Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, the Virgin Birth, sure! When you’re a priest everyday spewing this bulls— about the apple and the snake etc. You can see him just saying, ‘Ah, F— it, just blow me, kid!’” (There was very shocked, nervous laughter from the audience).

“How does a human being with a brain no bigger than yours know more about the world?” He then imitated the pope saying, “Don’t masturbate. Why? Because I have a robe and pointy hat!” “Come on, it’s so gay, the Church! With the robes and the smoke and kneeling in front of the priest with your mouth open [he imitated this] eating God.” (Shocked laughter again). Maher did not mock Jews or blacks. He mocked Muslims but qualified it by saying things like: “99% of the people who live in the Middle East are not terrorists,” or, “My Muslim friends get mad at me when I point out the failings of Muslim countries.” Even when he spoke degradingly about women, he

still had disclaimers. No such treatment was afforded Catholics.

#### **May 14**

**New York, NY**—Emerging Artists Theatre Company performed the play “Screaming in the Wilderness,” by Vanda Wark, a professor at Metropolitan College in New York. The play began with a parody of the Mass in garbled Spanish, during which a young priest proclaims himself to be Christ returned. The Church was portrayed as corrupt. The poster for the play stated, “The media makes up stories so that we are entertained...religious institutions are corporations with a product to sell...who will come along to guide us?”

#### **May 15**

**Cambridge, MA**—The MIT Community Players, sponsored by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presented the play “The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told,” by Paul Rudnick. The play, a gay retelling of the Bible, featured full male frontal nudity, filthy language, discussion of body parts, butch lesbians, effeminate gay men, ranting against nature, and damning God for AIDS.

#### **May 17**

**Chicago, IL**—The Athenaeum Theatre hosted the Chicago Improv Festival featuring Second City cast members. “Tiny” Tim Kazurinsky did a sketch in which he went through a list of school closings, one of them being “Our Lady of the Rancid Heart.” George Wendt “inhabited a corrupt Cardinal mixing homages to Mayor Daley...and God,” according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

#### **June 5**

**Miami, FL**—City Theatre presented “Summer Shorts 2003.” Included was a play titled “First Communion” by Mary Gallagher. The play deals with a remembrance of that event capped by a rebuke from a “ghastly caricature of an insensitive nun,” wrote the *Sun-Sentinel*. The *Miami New*

*Times* described the play as “an obvious, tedious exercise in Catholic-bashing.”

## **June 6**

***San Francisco, CA***—The Museum of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender History began featuring an exhibit on Harvey Milk, the deceased gay San Francisco supervisor. It was the inaugural exhibit of the Museum of GLBT History. Included in the exhibit was a portrait of Milk by Robert Lentz called “Saint Harvey.” It pictured Milk in the style of saint iconography with a halo behind his head and holding a lit candle.

## **June 12**

***Cincinnati, OH***—The Know Tribe Theatre presented Terrence McNally’s “Corpus Christi.” The play depicts Jesus having sex with the 12 Apostles. The theatre receives operational money from the city of Cincinnati.

## **June 25**

***Alexandria, VA***—Dominion Stage presented “Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?” by John Powers. The play features stereotypical parodies of Catholic nuns and Catholic school students, and trivializes the Sacrament of Penance.

## **July**

***Shepherdstown, WV***—Shepherd College’s Contemporary American Theater Festival featured Lee Blessing’s play, “Whores.” The play centers on a Salvadoran general’s fantasizing about three American nuns and one Catholic social worker raped and killed by his soldiers; it is based on a true story. The *Washington Times* called it “loaded with anti-Catholicism,” and said that the nuns and social worker lose their humanity again at the hands of the playwright.

## **August**

***St. Louis, MO***—Out of Line Productions staged David Dillon’s play, “Party.” It revolves around a bawdy party game in which

gay men enact their fantasies in various stages of undress. One of the main characters playing the game is a gay priest—"Father Ray."

### **August**

**Los Angeles, CA**—Debra De Liso, adjunct professor of acting and playwriting at the University of Southern California, wrote the play "Cock Tales" billed as a "male 'Vagina Monologues.'" It contains 13 monologues about the male member. All are non-fictional except two, one about a transvestite, and one about a pedophile priest.

### **September 3**

**San Francisco, CA**—The play "Scabaret!," a "shock-rock cabaret," was part of the San Francisco Fringe Festival. It included a "near-naked, tap-dancing female pope with a strap-on sex toy performing an exceptionally sacrilegious mass."

### **September 9**

**Philadelphia, PA**—The rock musical "Altar Boy," by Michael Macomber, premiered at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. It is supposedly based on the author's experience of being abused by his stepfather, who was also the janitor for a Catholic school. The first song of the production has the lyrics, "I confess I've got no use for priests. Churches just give me the creeps...." One character, Fr. Dominic, is described as a "leering priest."

### **November 14**

**New York, NY**—Anthony J. Wilkinson's play "My Big Gay Italian Wedding" opened at The Actor's Playhouse. It includes the character of a Catholic priest whom the mother of one of the gay characters insists should perform the wedding. Because there are no same-sex marriages in the Catholic Church, a Unitarian pastor performs the wedding. Anita Gates of the *New York Times* wrote, "Take away what [the play] borrowed from 'Father of the Bride,' 'The Birdcage,' 'The Sopranos' [and] the pedophile priest scandals...and there is not much left."

## **November 28**

**New York, NY**—During a Thanksgiving night comedy act by Paul Mooney at Caroline's Comedy Club, Mooney said of Michael Jackson, "If Michael was a priest and not a pop star, he'd have been transferred to another parish." Richard Johnson of the *New York Post* reported that Eddie Murphy, friend of Jackson, "laughed the loudest" at this remark.

## **December 3**

**Meriden, CT**—Officials of Meriden Public Library banned five images of Jesus from display in the library. The paintings, all of which were reverential, were deemed violative of a policy that disallows "inappropriate" and "offensive" fare. The paintings portrayed a nativity scene, Jesus carrying the cross, His crucifixion, resurrection and a portrait of Christ with a halo. Children, library officials argued, might be disturbed to see these images. The rest of the exhibit, "Visions, Hopes and Dreams," was declared acceptable, but artist Mary Morley canceled it when she was told to censor Jesus. Portraits of Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa, Moses with the Ten Commandments, as well as the prophet Elijah, were deemed acceptable. After the Catholic League protested, the library's board of directors voted unanimously to allow Morley to display all her images.

## **December 4**

**Boston, MA**—Ryan Landry's play, "Who's Afraid of the Virgin Mary?," a parody of Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" premiered at Machine. The lead roles of the arguing couple were played as St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother. Landry, a drag queen, played Mary. They are visited in the stable on Christmas Eve by Kris Kringle and his wife (also played by a man). Landry said, "I consider myself a Christian. I see nothing wrong with 'playing' the Virgin Mary in drag or (suggesting) that she has a drinking problem."